536 Less common are the Gergely járás play, a student
796 recruiting play performed in some places on March 12, Saint
857 Gregory's day, formerly the day on which school began; the Balázsolás, on February 3, the day of Saint Blasius, patron of children; and the Pünkösdölés, a Pentecostal play featuring the election of a queen for the day.

The children performing these plays collect gifts of food from the host at the end of their performance.

535 Folk dancing. Among the group dances of the Hungarian peasants, round dances are performed today only by children and unmarried girls, and are very uncommon among the men. Women never dance the single dances, which are reserved exclusively for men.

The most important types of single men's dances are the dance of the best man (vőfély), rich in improvisations, a few sword or stick dances, and herdsmen's dances. The latter feature crouching dance steps similar to those of the Cossacks. The most famous men's group dance is the verbunkos, or recruiting dance, which is characterized by quiet and graceful movements. The round dance is just one of the many figures in

10:Viski E-4,5 (no date)1932 EC1 Hungary EC1

787 fully aware of the importance of trances and this is what his
538 hero, who had to go into exile and was longing to perform great deeds, says in his popular poem, Toldi :

Good Bence, you tell my mother,
Her son's star has gone into mourning just now:
For a long while she will not see nor hear from him,
His fame will be buried, as though he were dead.
But he won't die, only disappear,
As one does if one hides very deeply,
And when he wakes after a certain time,
Wonderful things will be told about him.

787 If we remember that the Hungarians, like many other
857 people, were adherents of Shamanism in a certain period of their ancient history, these remnants can easily be understood. But the Shaman, the priest of the pagan Shamanism, is not only a fortune teller, who can look beyond the veil, but, as is usually the case in the religious and social life of more primitive people, is also a doctor and magician, who drives away illnesses and cures them not with medicines, but with magic spells and songs. And if «he wants to hide» — that is in modern parlance — if he wants to fall into trance, besides other things, he prepares himself by dancing, singing and by performing to the accompaniment of drums ceremonial exercises which need superhuman strength. Traces of this can be found even to this day in Hungarian folklore ; of course as in so many other cases merely in the children's playful rhymes :

Stork, stork, turtle-dove,
Why are your feet bleeding?
Turkish children have cut them,
Hungarian children will cure them,
*With pipes, drums and violins . . .*

781 In the game which goes with this little rhyme, they beat each other with great noise and rapid gesticulation. In mins-

10:Viski E-4, 5 (no date) 1932 EC1 Hungary EC1

# Customs of Saint Gregory's and Saint Blase's days

857 It is no great compliment to be called a «knight of Saint Gregory's» in Hungarian... as Pope Gregory's knights are merely «tiddlers» amongst men:

As young trees
In an orchard,
Children and good boys
Are brought up
By God...

[776] Saint Gregory as well as Saint Blase are the patrons of children and teaching. The troupe of schoolchildren, who go round the houses singing on Saint Blase's day (the [796] 3rd of February) and on Saint Gregory's day (the 12th of March) are the army of these saints... They are also dressed like soldiers with shakos and wooden swords... And so that everyone shall be sure of this, they sing:

I'm a soldier,
I stand on my heels,
I look around proudly
And gnash my teeth:
I know I look frightening...

But we are not as easily impressed as all that, even though they brandish their swords, they are only the envoys of saints... They recruit for their school the children who want to play truant; occasionally they even collect financial support for their schoolmaster. They like to copy the military forms of real recruiting. This is no wonder, as on few other occasions in the Hungarian past did such beautiful

10: Viski E-4, 5 (no date) 1932 EC1 Hungary EC1

scenes, such fascinating and charming dances occur as during the recruiting of Hungarian soldiers. The memory of all this is alive in their childish rhymes : 857

Bishop Blase sent out
His smart recruiting sergeants,
He had his red flag
Stuck into the midst of the market.
Now dear little friend
Let's have a grand time :
Our bottle is filled with wine
Let us dance gaily and happily !

Of course there is no question of wine, but the baby troupe is truly a gay, lively, joking crowd. Like the real recruiters, the dancing hussars, who praised the gallant soldier life, they praise the school where the master provides the music, and if he bends his whip, there is plenty of opportunity for dancing . . .

Before learning became obligatory, Saint Blase's soldiers lured the truants with the beauties of learning to spell. As Saint Blase's day falls in the Carnival, there are plenty of references to it in the eloquent spelling rhymes : 857 522

S, E, D : this little girl is so depres*SED*,
that she could not put up her hair
and did not get married !
E, E, E : don't be so d*EjEctEd* !

But they laugh also at themselves according to the following verse :

unch, unch, unch : what's the scholar's *lunch?*
we know that it is soup or pap,
I wish I had never seen or tasted it !
unch, unch, unch : what's the scholar's *lunch?*

Other well-known jokes also appear in their verses, such as the dragging of the trunks along the village to enrage the girls who did not get married :

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Ohi, ohi, ohi, away,
To-day it is Ash-Wednesday,
Girls, you better drag the trunk
Onto the nearest main road.

857 The military touch displayed in these two customs[1] is
[212] the explanation of the fact that Hungarian children grew so fond of them, although they are purely Christian — that is fairly recent — customs. The spelling is also of Western origin; it is only here that the Hungarians learnt Western writing. It is true that this was very long ago : already in 1055 Hungarian words were written with Latin letters. Their ancient writing, which the Hungarians had brought with them from the East, had been runes traced from right to left. Bonfinio, the court historian of King Mathias, made this comment on it : — «with few signs they express much meaning». The oldest document of this ancient Hungarian writing dates from 1515. But the ancient runes were gradually forgotten, and the Hungarians also enlisted as Saint Gregory's knights
[867] and Saint Blase's spelling soldiers. — They learnt a great many good and beautiful things. They learnt the Golden ABC, which had arranged in alphabetical order all the highest Christian moral teachings, and nothing was left out of this collection ! This is how it began :

a : all that you do not want for yourself
you must not do it to others !

b : burden the servants of your house
as much as you want to be burdened yourself !

When the Protestant students of Sárospatak (a historic Hungarian college) grew tired of these perpetual moral teachings, they made parodies of these verses. This is what they invented for the letters :

40 [1] [i.e. the recruiting of truants for their schools and the singing of spelling rhymes -- Analyst]

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s: Storks on the house chatter,
What is not of linen may be of leather.
One armchair is not a box,
Charles the 9th may yet live long!

But enough of all this teaching, and of the «a b : ab, and all the rhymes, the best we can do is to wait for the presents and then, in the words of Saint Blase's soldiers: «In God's name, let the whole crowd of us go next door!» It is high time that:

e, d: ed: our poem shall be finish-e-d;
we can't dally here any longer,
we have to hurry on;
e, d: ed: The Name of Jesus be bless-e-d!

## Easter customs

796 [785] The Hungarian word for Easter «húsvét» means the eating of meat, that is to say the time when people stop fasting strictly. On Shrove Tuesday people give up eating meat and it is only at Easter that they take to it again — and very glad they are to do so. In Catholic districts the fasting rule is taken very seriously; it is particularly hard for those who do not live on rich food anyhow. Even apart from Lent there are many more days in the year than there are sausages in their larder. Towards the end of [262] Lent Prince Cibere («cibere» is a cabbage soup, a poor Lent dish) declares war on King Marrow-bone: the thin fasting soup on the good marrow-bone, fasting on satiety, human patience on human desire... The fight is already decided before Easter: according to popular custom on Palm Sunday. The Prince and the King measure their force twice every year: on Shrove Tuesday and on Palm

10: Viski E-4, 5 (no date) 1932 EC1 Hungary EC1

# Whitsuntide customs

527 177 The Hungarians came into their present lands more than a thousand years ago, and it was naturally here that they adopted Christianity and learnt all the terms of the Christian faith; often indeed they merely clothed with a new meaning the old expressions of their former pagan creed. The Hungarian name of Whitsun: «pünkösd», like its German synonym «Pfingsten», is derived either from the Latin «Dies Pentacostis», or the original Greek «Pentakosté» of the New Testament. The Hungarians did not call this feast after the rose as did their Slav neighbours, but its popular name is «Red Whitsun», and one of the favourite flowers in Hungarian gardens is the «Whitsun rose», that is the peony. As early as the 18th century a charming Hungarian folk song mentions Whitsun in connection with the rose:

You wern't born from a mother,
You have grown on a rosebush;
On Red Whitsun's day
You were born from a rose!

This fragment of a popular song undoubtedly formed part of the habitual Whitsun songs or the game known as «Whitsun's queen».

527 789 883 857 The fact that the Hungarian name of Whitsun is merely a thousand years old does not imply that the Hungarian game of having a Whitsun queen originates from a similar date. It is much older than human memory and is merely an adaptation of the feast of fertility and fertilization, celebrated at the time of nature's blossoming. It is a pagan tradition, which lives all over Europe in the Christian world, surreptitiously and almost entirely devoid

527 of its real meaning. But everywhere it has its local colour,
789 its local bearing or its local peculiarities. According to
the simplest form of this custom, the older girls rig out
883 a little one in a white dress and carry her all over the
857 village. The child has a wreath on her head and her face
is covered by a veil. Thus they carry the mysterious little
queen from house to house, from yard to yard and, dancing
around her, they sing their charming song:

God has brought us
Red Whitsun's day,
We will carry around
Our little queen,
And the rose wreath of
Our little queen.
To young men we give
A bunch of sweet carnations,
To old men we give
A bottle of sweet wine,
To old women we give
A delicious dove pie.
I wasn't born from a mother
I have grown on a rosebush,
On Red Whitsun's day
I was born in the dawn, etc.

At the end of the song they lift the little queen by her arms with the cry: «let's lift the queen!» — She is usually a small girl of five or six and lifting her veil they say to the lady of the house: «May your hemp grow as high as this!» It is well known that amongst other things hemp is also the symbol of fertility. As the lifting of the Whitsun queen symbolizes a magic charm to ensure a good hemp harvest, so sitting her on the ground is supposed to prevent the hemp from growing. This is what the procession does if the hostess will not give the queen a warm reception, or will not allow her to enter the court-yard, or if having let her enter it, she puts nothing into the basket of the ladies-

189 in-waiting. The magic extends in some places to other
527 plants as well, in the following order:
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The queen's wand
Shall bring to this house
Wine, wheat and fruit.

Hemp is the symbol of fertility, and now-a-days the Whitsun feasters apply their magic primarily to an ample hemp harvest; but they also wish for abundant «wine, wheat and fruit», the main products of this little agricultural country. There is a close connection between the admittance of young men to manhood and this fertilizing magic; and we do find in the latter faint traces of an ancient initiation ceremony. Thus it is a rule that the queen's face must remain composed even if people lift her veil, laugh at her or tickle her. Very similar is the duty imposed on the «sad king», who has a part in the custom of setting up a May-tree: he is not allowed to laugh either. This same custom is prevalent in the initiation ceremonies of primitive people: the person who is being initiated is not allowed to show fright, nor must he laugh whatever the joke may be.

527 Very long ago the King of Whitsun probably appeared
883 with the little queen. Traces of this are found in one of
857 the Whitsun games on the Great Plain, where one of the bridesmaids has a kerchief around her head, as though she were a married woman, and another girl acts the part of the bridegroom. The song of these Whitsun celebrators refers also to a Hungarian royal wedding of the Árpád family, which occurred in 1211, the bride being no less a person than Saint Elisabeth of Hungary, who married a prince of Thuringia. She was the daughter of King Andrew II. of Hungary. We may well wonder why the children's custom preserved the memory of this great event. This is the song:

1 [See cat 116, p. 62--Analyst]

10: Viski E-4, 5 (no date) 1932 EC1 Hungary EC1

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What is to-day? What is to-day?
It is Red Whitsuns day;
To-morrow will be, to-morrow will be
Its second day, its second day.
Andrew is gallant and grand,
He is married and a good dancer;
Her husband is a rare lad,
While she is as good as gold.
Hold well, pull well
The bit of your horse,
It shan't trample, it shan't crush
Whitsun flowers, red peonies.
Whitsun's flower, the red peony
Leant over the main road,
The bride shall pick her up
And tie her into a wreath.

In this variation sung on the Great Plain Andrew alone is mentioned, but in another known in Transdanubia the queer, tottering lines of the ancient text speak of the princess as well.

My sister, my sister, my sister,
My Lady Saint Elisabeth,
I would willingly ransom you
If only I had a ransom.
Why did you give yourself
To someone else, to someone else?
I gave myself
To some one else,
God shall be kind to me,
Take care of me.

How did the Hungarian princess, sent as a bride to Thuringia at the age of four, find her way into the playful remnants of this ancient pagan custom? Perhaps through the legends woven about Elisabeth? The beautiful figure of Saint Elisabeth fitted perfectly into the Whitsun games, all mixed up with «Whitsun roses», since the alms meant for her poor had turned into roses in her lap. In other

games played by the children at Whitsun, Saint Elisabeth stands on the drawbridge, facing the people who want to enter the castle; in the next stage they spy around the castle in order to find out whether there is a marriageable girl in it; they then sing about Elisabeth's «queenly qualities»; finally they kidnap her after the ancient manner of acquiring brides, and carry her off into a royal tent, made of silk.

Though learned research is not quite certain about the connection, it is undeniable that the ancient pagan «king of the spring» feasts have had their separate Hungarian development. We mention this merely as a proof of the existence of such local, in this case Hungarian, modifications.

While the rosy cheeks of the little Whitsun queen fit so beautifully the rosy mood of Red Whitsun's day, in a few places there are also Whitsun kings and Whitsun royal elections. The Hungarian proverb: «It lasts as long as a Whitsun kingdom» (meaning quickly passing glory) is derived from this custom. In many places Whitsun's kingdom resolves itself into the election of an arbiter of young men. Small wonder, considering that once the two meant the same thing. The Whitsun king is elected nowa-days, but at one time he had to win a competition to acquire such exalted rank; he had not merely a high position, but owned a royal throne! There was no literal throne, but he had the title of king, and Whitsun's king had power, exceptional rights and regalia. In Transdanubia the competition was often a race run on horseback. Usually the cleverest lad acquires his distinction by strength and shrewdness. Whitsun's Kingdom lasts for a year. It can only continue if in the next year's race Whitsun's King wins again. Otherwise the privileged position is gone, and so is power and the right to eat and drink at the expense of other lads! In one word the lovely dream — Whitsun's Kingdom — is over!

527 As it is now in this game, so is it with real kings in
883 the case of primitive people, and so was it probably with the ancient Hungarian leaders. The king was sent asleep, but into eternal sleep, as perhaps the Hungarians did with their leader Almos, who led them as far as this country. Almos in Hungarian means «sleepy». According to simple people death is only a kind of sleep; children have the same notion.

[773] The Hungarian peasant explains the election of the Whitsun king as «. . . the imitation of an old custom. Once upon a time the councillors of the country elected every year a new king on Whitsun's day; he was usually a shepherd boy. They gave him a sleeping draught, and they were wont to seat him on the throne in an unconscious state. But his power only lasted until the following Whitsun. Then he was put asleep in the same way and was sent back to his old place.»

In the case of many of the more primitive peoples real kingship is more or less a Whitsun kingdom — passing glory. It does not last until the king's life is over, in fact it ends when the people so decide, or when the king is conquered. Then he is set aside and a stronger man takes his place.

[881] A few of the old customs in use for the initiation of adolescents have found their way into the custom of Whitsun's kingdom. We have already referred to the fact that in one variation of the game a bridgeroom appears beside the queen, and that one ancient Hungarian royal marriage has also been mixed up in it.

883 Serious ancient customs or habits are thus turned in
● 857 the course of time into childish games, bearing faint marks
527 of old memories. A thousand years ago the Hungarians brought terrifying new war tactics into Europe, and pious Western friars added to their prayers: «From the arrows

10: Viski E-4, 5 (no date) 1932 EC1 Hungary EC1

of the Hungarians Good Lord deliver us !» These terrifying arrows have also become children's toys in our days... Two worlds preserved the things men used in ancient time: the world of primitive people and the world of children. In these two worlds the King of Whitsun lives. In one quite seriously, in the other only as a game.

In some parts of the country merely the name «little queen of Whitsun» is still alive, but her four companions, who represent the four evangelists, bear no trace of pagan influence. The first mentions a lion, the second an angel, the third a lamb: the symbols of the evangelists. The fourth ought to mention the eagle, but he only refers to the regal bird's empire of the clouds in the air, and in a way which almost suggests rain conjuring:

Oh wine, dear wine,
Has no cloud been this way?
A cloud shall come this way
From the lofty sky!

A veil however covers the face of the little queen according to ancient custom...

## The feast of wheat

«Wheat, wine, peace and a good looking wife !» — Thus does the Hungarian man summarize the collection of wishes he expects life to fulfil for him, — or which he wants to gain in his fight with Fate. The wine of Tokaj, Eger, Badacsony, Somlyó, the bread and festive cakes of the Tisza district, stay in the memory of the person who has once tasted them. Did we wish to express the longing for these things in a popular form, we would say:

Whoever has drunk the water of the Tisza,
Always longs to come back to it!

It gives you a wonderful feeling to know all this and

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to see day after day, how the people's state provides for the workers, for their wives and children. Ferenc Gergely has two children, Marika who is six years old and was born under the People's Democracy and Joska, who is thirteen and is in the seventh grade at elementary school. Joska is a pioneer; he spent two weeks at one of the pioneer camps last summer and he is now serving a period of about four weeks at the Pioneer Train.

The Pioneer Railway is the gift of the Hungarian People's Democracy to the children. It rolls over eight miles, between Cool Valley and Liberty Hill, the most beautiful part of the capital. Every employee of the small railway is a pioneer. All are children: the conductors, the telegraphers, the station masters, the switch men and, naturally, the passengers. Or, rather, only part of the passengers, because the adults are just as fond as the children of this

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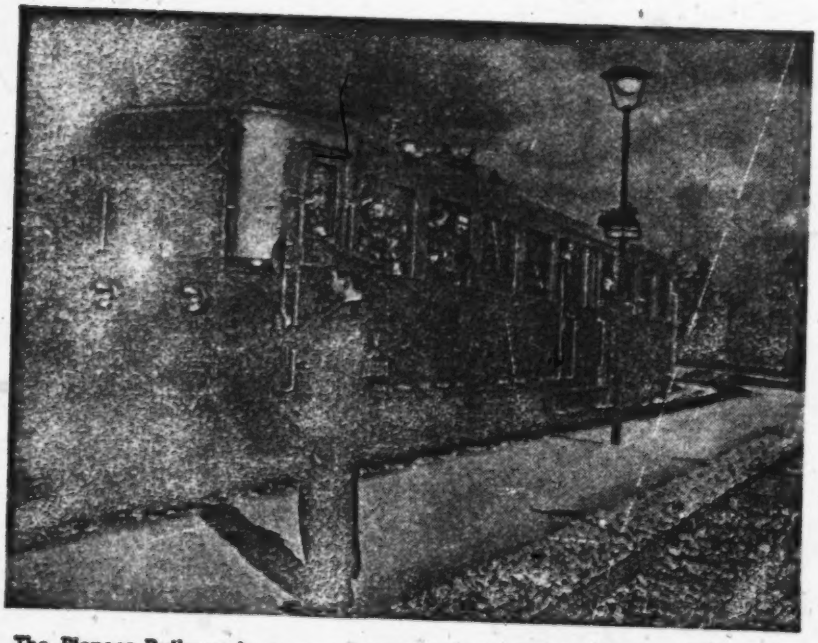

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**The Pioneer Railway is managed completely by children. It was given by the Hungarian People's Republic to the children of the country.**

857 529 half service half game institution which teaches the children a sense of responsibility. The Pioneer Railway is one of the favorite amusements of the children and an interesting spot of the capital.

Joska is deeply attached to the Pioneer Railway; he has repeatedly stated that he will become a railway man. It must be said, however, that he has at least as many times asserted that he will be a turner. The boy is greatly attracted to machines: his dexterity is above average and his father knows that soon he will be an industrial apprentice.

Going for a morning stroll at a resort hotel on Mount Mecsek.